

TOWN OF NEWMARKET, NEW HAMPSHIRE
JOINT TOWN COUNCIL-SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

May 31, 2016 7:30 PM

TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Council Chairman Gary Levy, Council Vice Chairman Phil Nazzaro, Councilor Dale Pike, Councilor Amy Thompson, Councilor Toni Weinstein, Councilor Amy Burns, Councilor Kyle Bowden

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: School Board Chairman Nathan Lunney, School Board Vice Chairman Elizabeth McKinney, Al Zink, Kimberly Shelton, Mike Kenison

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Steve Fournier, New School Superintendent Meredith Nadeau, Alan Gould of MRI, State Representative Michael Cahill

AGENDA

The Joint Town Council-School Board Meeting was called to order at 7:28 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF PROCESS TO DATE

School Board Member Al Zink welcomed the public to the Joint Meeting of the Newmarket Town Council and the Newmarket School Board which was called together with the hope of improving the working relationship between the two boards. He said the meeting was also a result of the revised Town Charter calling for the Town Council to invite the School Board to a joint meeting annually, and a new State Law which will allow the Town and the School to share services. He said that the newest executive member of the team was Meredith Nadeau, who would start on July 1st as the New School Superintendent. He said that the community of Cape Elizabeth, ME, her current position, had shared administrations and services for several years.

Mr. Zink said the Town Council and the School Board had selected two members of each board to meet as a Sub-Committee to coordinate the meeting: Councilors Dale Pike and Toni Weinstein, School Board Members Kimberly Shelton and himself. He said the Sub-Committee had met twice to put together an agenda and their thoughts about what a good process might be. He said they decided early on that the

two best people to lead the shared-services discussion were the new School Superintendent and the Town Administrator, who would work together and come back to the Town Council and the School Board to share their priorities and make recommendations. He said on the School side, the most immediate issue was with facilities.

Councilor Dale Pike said he wanted to mention that Alan Gould of Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI) was present this evening. He explained that before they began looking for ways to share services, the Town Council had begun to look at ways to improve efficiencies in the Town and had contracted MRI to provide a report that would look at those issues. He said they realized there might be an opportunity to find efficiencies in combining some services with the School.

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SHARED PRACTICES - Steve Fournier, Meredith Nadeau

Report by the Town Administrator

Town Administrator Steve Fournier said he had first looked into services that the Town and School currently shared, and said the SAU and the Town was unusual for municipalities in New Hampshire, and that they shared a very open communication. He said he had asked his department heads to list things they were currently doing for the School, which mostly had to do with common business practices. He said the Information Technology (IT) Department shared knowledge, assisted with issues, and did all the testing for the School cameras. He said the Building Inspector provided facilities consultations and permit reviews and inspections, and the Police Department provided security for the schools. He said the Recreation Departments shared field space, Planning provided advice on zoning matters, and CIP Planning had been very active between the Town and the School. He said the Finance Director and the School Business Administrator shared advice and worked together to set the tax rate. He said they also shared all meeting facilities, did the annual Town Report together, and had started some group purchasing this year with an oil contract. He said the biggest was the Public Works Department which maintained all the school properties, cleaned catch basins, and provided trucks for hauling. He said they worked together on the Carpenter Property demolition and cleanup, built pads for the Modular Elementary School, and installed water and sewer and underground electrical conduits for the School District. He said if these services were not provided, the School would have to hire someone from outside which did not make sense. He said he had already had discussions with the new School Superintendent Meredith Nadeau, and felt there was a lot more they could do to find efficiencies.

Report by the New School Superintendent

New School Superintendent Meredith Nadeau stated that she had been in Cape Elizabeth, ME for 5 years, and said they had a shared-services model known as the One Town Concept. She said the Town had approximately 10,000 residents and was roughly the same size as Newmarket. She said they shared services in the same way but also shared a full Business Office, with one Business Administrator, one Human Resources person, and one Payroll and one Accounts Payable person. She said they also shared a Facilities Director who was the intermediary for both bodies and made a sharing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) a much easier task. She said they shared a Technology Director who was very much involved in planning design of technology infrastructure needs, and technicians could share support and services. She

said they also shared Public Works in much the same way as Newmarket. She explained that they used a shared supervision model, and she held regular meetings with their Town Manager. She felt one of the keys was good communication between the Town Administration and the School District Administration as well as regular meetings with department heads. She also stressed the importance of collaboration and the willingness for all involved to work together and problem-solve. She said both bodies worked together sharing one common pool of resources, and said they looked from time to time to make sure it was evenly distributed.

STEPS FORWARD

Mr. Zink stated that Meredith Nadeau had offered to allow the Sub-Committee to visit Cape Elizabeth, ME to become more knowledgeable about the shared services in that community. Councilor Pike said that in terms of steps forward, after starting the process and having discussions with Superintendent Nadeau and Town Administrator Fournier, the Sub-Committee decided that the best way forward was to let them put together a more detailed proposal. He said they also hoped they would be able as a combined group to endorse the process.

DISCUSSION

School Board Vice-Chair Elizabeth McKinney asked what the timeline would be with regard to hiring a finance director, as they were looking for a School Business Administrator. School Superintendent Nadeau replied that it would probably be some time in the next several months, as it depended on the consensus of the two bodies and would also involve some work laying out job descriptions, but pointed out there were also ways to address short-term issues. Town Administrator Fournier said they currently had an Interim Finance Director for the Town, but realized this was a good time to decide if the position should be shared. School Board Chairman Nathan Lunney said he felt the School District needed a good business administrator and they needed some continuity in that office. He said he felt the Facilities issue was more important, and said they had put some money in the budget for that purpose. He said he felt a Facilities Director and Management seemed to be an area where they could save money in the long run, but would mean potentially spending some dollars now. He asked if they were talking about sharing services to save money, or to get a job done as well as possible moving forward and find efficiencies in the process.

Councilor Thompson felt if the job descriptions were reworked, sharing a Business Administrator or a Finance Director and having a Facilities person handle all facilities would be streamlining expertise. Town Administrator Fournier said operationally, combing services like IT and payroll would also allow for someone to cover during vacations, and he felt both the Town and the School had Business Administrators were doing things a Facilities Director should be doing. School Board Chairman Lunney felt an engineer should also be handling the contracts and writing the specs on a regular basis, especially considering where the School was currently headed. School Superintendent Nadeau said she hoped the School District was headed toward either a renovation or a building project, and that having a point person for that project was a critical need. Mr. Mike Kenison stated that the NH Department of Education had changed their rules a few years ago to require a maintenance plan, which was not something typical of a Business Administrator. Town Administrator Fournier felt that having a shared facilities person would allow them to present a budget that had a better chance of passing, as they did not want to be competing against

each other for the same tax dollars. He said the Town had the Waste Water Bond and the School had the Facilities issue coming up at the same time. Councilor Nazzaro said it was also the community prioritizing where financial resources could be allocated, and felt that someone looking short- and long-term together was crucial.

Ms. Kim Shelton said that the meeting gave the School Board and the Town Council the chance to discuss priorities, and felt they also needed to build up a relationship. Councilor Weinstein said the Sub-Committee was really hoping for the Town Administrator and the new School Superintendent to come up with a plan which could be discussed with the individual boards. School Superintendent Nadeau said that in terms of a timeline she was not starting until July 1st, and asked that they be respectful that she was wrapping up things in another place and had not had time to observe operations here. Ms. Shelton said the Sub-Committee thought they could continue in their role and follow up with a timeline to make sure things were moving forward. Councilor Nazzaro said he preferred to have a date to make sure they had enough time before the Budget Season. School Superintendent Neadeau said she did not think either of them felt it was complicated, but that they wanted to be thoughtful about it and there was work to be done. Town Administrator Fournier said they also needed time to coordinate agreement from their boards.

Councilor Pike said nothing prevented them from have another Joint Town Council-School Board meeting, and said it might not be a grand plan where everything was integrated, but rather some pieces would happen earlier and others later on. Mr. Zink said the Sub-Committee would be willing to continue and make sure the communications and schedules happened. Councilor Pike asked if anyone wished to raise an objection to the idea of having the Town Administrator and the School Superintendent come back with a plan, otherwise he would consider that a unanimous vote in favor of moving forward. School Board Chairman Lunney felt that by September they should be having some preliminary conversations, and Town Administrator Fournier said that by Charter he had to have his budget to the Town Council by October 15th. Councilor Thompson said she was happy to continue with the Sub-Committee, but that it came down to Town Administrator Fournier and School Superintendent Nadeau working together to get it done and verify it.

Councilor Weinstein said she also wanted to get community input at some point in the process. Councilor Nazzaro said he would like to have a well thought out long-term plan with some actions they could take in the next year's budget so it could be codified. School Board Chairman Lunney agreed but felt that not every shared service needed to be addressed initially, and felt they should pick something and do it well, and they would find in that the credibility and trust needed to move forward. Council Chairman Gary Levy asked if it would make sense for them to put something together before the Budget Season and bring it to another Joint Meeting, where they could discuss it and finalize it. He said that way they would have an idea of what the benefits would be and any concerns they might have, and the Boards could then make a determination as to how they wished to proceed. He also said he felt there should be some type of measurement to diagnose problems as soon as possible. Mr. Zink pointed out that employees might be looking at this discussion and wondering about their future, and felt there should be some kind of confidence assured. Councilor Nazzaro asked how the MRI study would be brought into the discussion. Town Administrator Fournier said he felt that MRI had already gone through all the Town departments to

find efficiencies and operations, and that the next step would be looking at what sharing and efficiencies could be done with the School.

Council Chairman Levy asked about a timeframe, and Town Administrator Fournier felt early September to allow the new School Superintendent time to get settled. School Superintendent Nadeau felt there were some obvious openings and opportunities that they wanted to move forward with in this fiscal year and could work on where they might want to move in future budget years. As they did not know how it would work out, she felt they should report back on how it was working and have checkpoints along the way. Town Administrator Fournier felt the most important thing on the Town side was the buy-in from both boards. He said the frustrating thing with inter-municipal agreements was not wanting to give up authority, and School Superintendent Nadeau suggested they might have a shared services contract. Town Administrator Fournier pointed out that the Library was a separate entity as well which could also be discussed.

Mr. Zink felt there was a consensus to hold a second joint meeting. Dates in September were suggested, but School Superintendent Nadeau said the school year was already starting at that time, and it would put them in a difficult position, especially if progress was being made on a facilities project. School Board Chairman Lunney felt they needed to have a final plan before budgets were done and they did not want to miss the opportunity to codify an agreement. Councilor Thompson suggested August 1st as a target date as it would take time to work through the system. Town Administrator Fournier stated that his budget should be wrapping up by September 14th, which gave him time to meet his budget deadline one month later. Councilor Pike suggested that perhaps the Sub-Committee should continue in order to facilitate discussions across the board, and hold a joint meeting again in mid-August with August 1st as the plan deadline. School Superintendent Nadeau agreed they should give details about immediate needs and make projections for the longer term. She said she also agreed with what Mr. Zink said earlier that employees should not be concerned that either board was trying to wipe out the infrastructure. She felt there were some obvious vacancies right now with some obvious opportunities to share resources and that was a logical starting point.

Councilor Pike asked for closing comments and asked if there was any opposition to the idea of the Sub-Committee continuing. He said he felt as a body they had endorsed that Town Administrator Fournier and School Superintendent Nadeau would move forward on this project proposal, try to have the preliminary by August 1st with a second Joint Town Council-School Board meeting in Mid-August, and that the Sub-Committee would continue to stay engaged and facilitate communication. All Councilors and School Board members present were in agreement.

CIP PROCESS

Councilor Toni Weinstein addressed the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which looks at the future capital needs of the community projected over a 6-year period, and is a tool for the Town Council, the School, and the Budget Committee. She spoke briefly about the Charter Commission of 9 individuals elected to review the Charter in 2014, as there was some talk at that time about wanting to change the form of government in order to create efficiencies. She said they had added to the Charter that the Town Council should invite the School Board to one meeting annually to discuss projects and anticipate activity

for the coming year. She said they realized the School had to be involved in the CIP process in order to receive impact fees. Town Administrator Fournier said the CIP was a planning document and not a financial document, as Impact Fees needed to be justified by identifying long-term future projects. He said Town Planner Diane Hardy was the staff person for the CIP Committee. Councilor Weinstein defined a Capital Project as a non-recurring annual expense, as opposed to operational costs. She said the Capital Reserve Fund contributions were separate and worked more as a savings account for larger projects, and added that Bonding was another way to fund capital projects. Town Administrator Fournier stated that the CIP recommendations came to him, and he generally reduced them and then put them to the Town Council for approval. Councilor Weinstein said that some Town capital projects coming up were the Macallen Dam and roads.

Ms. Shelton stated that CIP was basically a new process for the School and before that all large projects were Warrant Article situations. She said the shift allowed the School to plan their bigger projects more effectively and the SAU to make recommendations for expenditures for FY2017. She said the first step was Building Security for both schools, and that they had tremendous support from Police Chief Cyr and his team to share services. She stated that the next piece for both schools was Facilities issues, which were all long-range CIP plans which would be addressed by the Facilities Committee, with the goal of the School Board to have a renovation or a new school warrant article on the ballot for next March. She said the Facilities Committee, led by School Board Member Mike Kenison, had already done a substantial amount of work, primarily looking over Educational Specifications in terms of programming to make them as specific as possible. She said they had set up a series of public input meetings on their plans starting tomorrow, and that as a result of this major project the School had budgeted for a Facilities Director.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Councilor Nazzaro stated that the community of Newmarket had a lot of capital reserve funds for the size of the Town and they had traditionally been savers with an extremely low debt as a result. He asked that moving forward jointly they consider the tradition of Newmarket to keep the tax rate as flat as possible. School Board Chairman Lunney pointed out that the School could not take the general operating budget surplus and put it in a Capital Reserve Fund like the Town, nor budget for it, but had to use separate warrant articles. Town Administrator Fournier said the process for the Town involved the Council authorizing appropriations to Capital Reserve Funds in the operating budget as one line item. Council Chairman Levy stated that the Town also had a mandate from the DES to do water runoff mitigation and storm water. He said the CIP traditionally came in higher than what was budgeted, though they tried to run the CIP as efficiently as possible. Councilor Nazzaro said that if the RSAs were holding the School back as a body, elected officials at the State level could provide assistance. Mr. Zink felt the discussion of the Town and the School over surplus was critical and they should make decisions together.

Councilor Pike said they would like to recognize State Representative Michael Cahill who had done a great job communicating with the State Legislature in changing the law to allow the Town and the School to work together. Mr. Zink said he had also taken a leadership role in State funding, and Mr. Kenison said he had also taken a lead role working with the DOE on retroactive aid for life safety at the Junior-Senior High School. School Board Chairman Lunney thanked everyone for the preparation and coordination of the

Joint Town Council-School Board Meeting
May 31, 2016

meeting, and thanked Town Administrator Fournier and School Superintendent Nadeau for the work they would be doing in July.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Thompson made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Councilor Weinstein. The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary

Approved July 20, 2016